

Final Report

March 2011 – September 2013

Projet d'Appui à la Sécurisation des Terres et Ouvrages Ruraux par un Aménagement Local¹



(PASTORAL I & II)

Funded by USAID/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)

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1. Executive Summary

In March 2011, USAID/OFDA funded the *Projet d'Appui à la Sécurisation des Terres et Ouvrages de Réhabilitation des Aires Locales* (PASTORAL) to mitigate the food insecurity of agro-pastoral and pastoral households in the international transhumance corridors in the northern part of the Filingué Department, Tillabéri region of Niger. The overall goal of the intervention was to enhance the food security, increase resilience and reduce the risk of disaster of 10,742 agro-pastoral and pastoral households in this zone. In March 2012, PASTORAL was extended until March 2013 and modified to include only its food security components. A no-cost extension was granted in February 2013, extending the PASTORAL-II program to May 31, 2013 to allow for an additional 30 days of Cash for Work (CFW) activities for 2,000 beneficiary

¹ English translation: Project for Land Improvement and Rehabilitation of Local Areas

households as well as the set up and training of ten additional Community Based Land Tenure Commissions (COFOBs). An Unfunded Modification was later granted, extending the implementation timeframe to occur by September 30, 2013 to complete the rehabilitation of pastoral wells.

Over the life of the award, the project reached 75,404 beneficiaries through interlinked agriculture, nutrition, economic recovery and disaster preparedness activities, designed to improve the food security of agro-pastoralist and pastoralist households in rural areas of the Filingué department. Responding to 2008/2009 and 2011/2012 food security crises, the PASTORAL program allowed vulnerable households to retain their existing animal assets through increased access to animal health services, increased access to fodder through value vouchers and improved fodder harvesting and storage, improved conflict management between communities over access to natural resources, improved conflict mitigation between herders and agro-pastoralists, and increased access to water resources through the rehabilitation of 9 pastoral wells. To help vulnerable households re-constitute animal assets that were lost due to the crisis, PASTORAL engaged 2,030 beneficiaries in Cash for Work activities and provided additional unconditional cash transfers at a time when households needed to concentrate on working their own farms. CFW projects successfully rehabilitated 888 hectares of degraded grazing land to further contribute to the recovery of affected communities. Empowering local actors to build community resilience to shocks, the program worked to strengthen local mechanisms for environmental and conflict-related risk management, notably through 30 community-based land tenure commissions (COFOBs). In the first year of the program, to improve household nutrition, PASTORAL also trained 6,027 agro-pastoralists in key nutrition practices using locally available foods. Overall, 10,145 people were trained in disaster preparedness, mitigation and management.

- Cumulative Beneficiaries Targeted: 75,194
- Cumulative Beneficiaries Reached: 75,404

2. Performance Summary – Achievements by Objective

This section follows the sectoral breakdown of PASTORAL I. Under PASTORAL II, all interventions fell under the Agriculture and Food Security sector. Targets and achievements are cumulated for PASTORAL I and PASTORAL II.

3.1 Agriculture and Food security

SECTOR #1 Agriculture and Food Security	<i>Targeted agro-pastoralists and pastoralists enhance and protect their animal assets</i>		
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 61,194 ²		
Beneficiaries Reached	61,194		
	Sub-Sector: Livestock		
INDICATORS	Baseline	Target	PROGRESS

² Including 6,000 households targeted under PASTORAL I and 2,742 households targeted under PASTORAL II, given the average household size of 7.

Number of animals benefiting from or affected by livestock activities	0	65,194 ³	65,194 ⁴
Number of people benefiting from livestock activities	0	61,194	61,194
Number of wells rehabilitated	0	10	9 (in addition to 5 rehabilitated with complementary private funds)
Number of animals fed through supplementary feed vouchers	0	47,194	47,194
Sub-Sector: Veterinary Medicines and Vaccines			
INDICATORS	Baseline	Target	PROGRESS
Number of veterinary interventions, treatments or vaccinations administered	0	3 major vaccinations and 1 antibiotic treatment	3 major vaccinations and 1 antibiotic treatment
Number of animals treated or vaccinated	0	18,000	18,904
Number of COFOB established and strengthened	0	20	30

Performance Summary – Agriculture and Food Security Sector

The PASTORAL program increased the food security of 47,194 vulnerable pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the Filingué department through a package of interventions designed to help households retain and protect their animal assets. To protect animal health, the program vaccinated 18,904 animals against three pathologies and trained 36 community animal health workers (CAHWs) to monitor animal diseases and administer vaccinations. In addition, a total of 6,742 beneficiaries received vouchers to purchase animal fodder, helping to prevent further animal losses during the time of year when animal fodder was most scarce. This activity was complemented by trainings on improved harvesting and storage techniques to ensure that fodder retained its nutritional value. What's more, through PASTORAL Mercy Corps was able to help communities rehabilitate and re-sow grazing lands, in order to increase fodder production, through cash-for-work (CFW) projects. Cash-for-Work also helped 2,030 affected households recover assets that were lost as a result of compounded crises (this outcome will be described in this report under the "Economic Recovery and Market Systems" sector). Finally, the rehabilitation of 9 pastoral wells in the target zone, and the establishment of local structures (a water management committee for each rehabilitated well) to manage water resources, will help PASTORAL communities care for their animals and protect and maintain local infrastructure for years to come.

Animal Vaccination: In the fourth quarter of FY11, Mercy Corps signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a private veterinary service to carry out the vaccination campaign, which

³ This number includes 18,000 animals receiving vaccinations under PASTORAL I + an approximate 28,000 benefiting from supplemental feed under PASTORAL I + 19,194 benefiting from supplemental feed in PASTORAL II (given the average number of livestock/household = 7)

⁴ Additional animals are also benefiting from the 9 rehabilitated pastoral wells (an average of 3,500 animals/well), though we did not quantify those animals here as to avoid double-counting with animals benefiting from other activities.

reached 18,904 animals (5% more than targeted) with vaccinations against three pathologies: black anthrax; symptomatic anthrax; and pasteurellose. Vaccinations were conducted in close coordination with the GoN extension services. Among the 18,904 cattle vaccinated, 50 percent were also de-wormed, 25 percent received vitamins, and five percent that presented signs of sickness were treated with antibiotics. The vaccines were manufactured by the government's central veterinary laboratory in Niamey and distributed by three main pharmacies: CENTRAVET, VETOMAX, and CAMAVET. Other drugs (antibiotics, vitamins, anti-worms, etc.) were imported by wholesalers.

Vouchers for animal feed: In the third quarters of FY11 and FY12, Mercy Corps distributed animal feed vouchers to a total of 6,742 vulnerable households in order to care their livestock (4,000 in PASTORAL I, 2,742 in PASTORAL II)– reinforcing the benefit of animal vaccination activities. A total of 1,011.3 MT of fodder was distributed through the voucher system over the two rounds of distribution. Mercy Corps selected beneficiaries through a survey of households who lost animals during the 2009/2010 crisis and those who were most affected by the 2011/2012 food crisis. This survey was in addition to the one conducted by the GoN, and was conducted in close collaboration with local authorities, village chiefs, community representatives, beneficiaries themselves and other aid actors present in the area. The following specific criteria were used to select all the 6,742 beneficiaries of animal feed voucher distribution.

1. Households who lost 30% or more of their flock during the 2009 and 2010 food crisis
2. Households who were most affected by the 2011/2012 crisis
3. Vulnerable households with children under age 5
4. Vulnerable households who were not being assisted by other partner agencies,
5. Households who are extremely vulnerable as per the criteria set by the GoN support plan for the crisis.

According to the program's final evaluation, over 99% of those who received vouchers for fodder noticed an improvement in the health of their animals following the acquisition of additional feed – they reported that their animals had gained weight and were producing more milk.

Training on fodder harvest and storage: Over the course of the program, Mercy Corps worked with the GoN livestock extension service to conduct trainings on improved practices of fodder harvesting and storage, to benefit twenty pastoralist communities.

Trainings were conducted in close collaboration with the Livestock Extension service, with the participation of 1,530 beneficiary households in 30 PASTORAL I & II communities. Before these trainings, communities stocked fodder on the roofs of houses, unprotected. Trainings were developed to improve their previous practices by:

- Cutting grass when it is still green
- Drying in the shade and storing in closed shelter or pits so the grass will retain its nutritional value
- Treatment of dried straw collected after the rainy season with either salt or urea to increase its ingestion and digestibility
- Production of multi-nutritional blocks with local ingredients to increase the micro nutrients that animals need and enhance the value of dry straw

- Management and rationing of fodder

To reinforce these trainings, 30 fodder storage demonstration facilities were constructed in participating villages with locally made materials. As a result of these practical trainings, communities will be better able to improve the nutritional value of fodder, stock it for longer periods and maintain its nutritional value; thereby improving animal health during hard times of finding fodder, dry seasons, drought or animal feed shortages. Through the implementation of these techniques, communities can more easily fatten their animals, increasing their assets and overall capacity to meet their basic needs.

Rehabilitation of Pastoral Wells: Mercy Corps rehabilitated 9 pastoral wells (5 in PASTORAL I and 4 in PASTORAL II) in the target zone to benefit agro-pastoralist and pastoralist populations.

PASTORAL also established nine water management committees (a committee for each well) of 5 community members each (3 women and 2 men), to ensure fair access to water sources while minimizing conflicts between users (herders and agro-pastoralists) and ensuring protection and maintenance of the wells. The members were chosen through a transparent process by community members in the presence of local authorities and Mercy Corps staff. Over the course of the PASTORAL program, all nine management committees received training on water source management and maintenance and on conflict prevention and management techniques.

While Mercy Corps had originally planned to finish the rehabilitation of 5 wells under PASTORAL II by May 2013, delays were encountered during the rehabilitation of these 5 wells and ultimately only 4 of the 5 rehabilitation projects were completed. The most significant delay was due to the fact that the initial contractor chosen to complete the work on the five wells did not complete its obligations with regards to quality and timeliness. Mercy Corps, in consultation with government partners (the department of hydraulics), decided then to cancel the contract and seek the services of another contractor in the third quarter of FY13. Subsequent timing required for re-bidding and contracting the well work required an unfunded modification for this activity, which was granted in May 2013, extending the end date of the program to September 30, 2013. A new service provider was contracted to complete the wells, and work began in May 2013, with close monitoring by the GoN technical services and a Mercy Corps staff member dedicated to the supervision of the well rehabilitation. By the end of September 2013, work was completed on four of the five wells, offering improved water sources for those pastoral communities.

Unfortunately, in early September one of the wells (located in Guijrya, Sanam Commune, Abala Department) presented technical- and safety-related issues. A joint visit by Mercy Corps, the GoN water department and the engineering company was conducted to analyze the situation. Based on the technical analysis of the well, all parties agreed that the damage was not the responsibility of any present party and that the only possible course of action was to abandon the rehabilitation of the well, as continuing work would jeopardize worker safety and eventually render the well less productive to users than at present. Thus, 1 planned well was not rehabilitated by the program.

Still under this activity and with complementary private funding, Mercy Corps completed the rehabilitation of 5 other wells in the department of Filingué and Abala. Through PASTORAL I and II funded by OFDA, and the complementary private funding, Mercy Corps was able to rehabilitate a total of 14 wells to benefit pastoral agro-pastoral communities in the target zone over the implementation period.

Well rehabilitation was completed in the following villages: *Toukounouss Station, Tidiba, Gorou, Tamatchi, Arné, N'goubara, Tantigar, Maiguizaza and, Kahougué*, in Filingué and Abala departments, Tillabéri region.



Hari, fetching water from the well at Toukounouss to water her garden

Hari, Toukounouss resident: “I was born in this village – I’m a 60 year old widow and have 7 children and many grandchildren. I have 6 cows and 8 goats that are very important for my livelihood – when times are tough I can sell some of my livestock to help feed my children and grand-children. The well rehabilitated by Mercy Corps solved a major problem for everyone in the village. Everyone is very pleased to be able to water their animals – even other nomadic groups come here as well to water their animals. Since the well was rehabilitated I asked the village chief for a piece of land nearby, where I have planted a garden of melons, cabbage and squashes. I can easily get water from the well to water the garden. I sell many of the melons and squashes to buy millet and rice.”

3.2 Economic Recovery & Market Systems

SECTOR #2 Economic Recovery & Market Systems	<i>Targeted agro-pastoralist and pastoralist populations reconstitute their animal assets</i>		
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 14,000		
Beneficiaries Reached	14,210 / 102%		
Sub-Sector: Temporary Employment			
INDICATORS	Baseline	Target	PROGRESS
Number of people employed through Cash-for-Work (CFW) activities	0	2,000	2,030
Average USD amount per person earned through the Cash-for-Work (CFW)	0	\$173	\$409 for initial 1500 beneficiaries (over 3 rounds), \$87 for additional 500 NCE beneficiaries (in 1 round of CFW)
Average USD amount per person earned through unconditional cash transfer activities	0	\$183	\$183
Number and percent of women employed through Cash-for-Work (CFW) activities	0	1000/50% out of 2,000	1119 / 55%

Performance Summary – Economic Recovery and Market Systems Sector

Over the course of program implementation, PASTORAL helped 2,030 vulnerable pastoral and agro-pastoral households recover their productive assets through Cash-for-Work activities and Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT). According to the program's final evaluation, the extra income gained by Cash-for-Work allowed a significant improvement in the lives of beneficiaries. In fact, over 90% of households surveyed in March 2013 reported having 3 meals/day, compared with 17.33% at the start of the program. Most CFW beneficiaries spent the money they earned in local markets and village shops, which had an added benefit for the local economy.

The first cycle of CFW activities was completed May-July 2011, under PASTORAL I, following a strong partnership established with the local authorities to ensure collaboration and ownership of the project activities. That included a series of meetings with communities, local administration and traditional leaders, government extension services, and all the NGOs working in the targeted area, to ensure a clear and transparent beneficiaries selection process, and prevent duplication of efforts. Three communities contributed with local materials (manure and seed) to restore grazing lands - Kania (70 ha), Tarkassa (65 ha) and Toukounouss (70 ha) - and 1,030 household beneficiaries participated in labor adapted to their ability for a duration of 60 days (earning about \$198 total). 48% of the initial CFW participants were women, far exceeding the initial target of 10%. During this first cycle, 205 hectares of degraded land was rehabilitated with the construction of 1,241 "banquettes," where animal manure was spread and wild seeds planted to regenerate fodder.

The second cycle of CFW activities took place between April and June 2012, also with the aim of rehabilitating degraded community lands. The original 1,000 beneficiaries identified in phase I continued work on the this phase of Cash for Work activities, and an additional 500 beneficiaries were identified using the vulnerability criteria determined by the Government of Niger household survey with cooperation from village heads, community groups, partner groups, and Mercy Corps. These 1,500 participants, 51% of whom were women, worked between 28 and 52 days over the second round and earned an average of \$123. An additional 200 hectares of land was rehabilitated and re-seeded during the second round of CFW.

Then, by the end of June 2012, a government provision recommended to stop all CFW activities in the region in order to enable farmers to devote their time to working in their own farms during the rainy season. As such, with approval from USAID/OFDA, Mercy Corp provided three months of unconditional cash transfers to support the food needs of 2,000 households during their fieldwork and harvest from July to September 2012. The 2,000 beneficiaries included the 1,500 CFW workers (who had participated in round 2, above) as well as an additional 500 households identified using the vulnerability criteria determined by the Household Economy Assessment approach and the Government of Niger household survey, in cooperation with village leaders, community groups and other NGOs working in the area.

Finally, a third cycle of CFW was implemented in May 2013, involving the same 2,000 vulnerable households who received UTC the previous year. During the last round, land recovery activities were carried out on seven sites where land had been degraded, involving individuals from 13 villages. As with the previous rounds, CFW activities included installing “banquettes”, designed to catch water flowing across degraded land, allowing for absorption and plant regeneration. Beneficiaries received approximately \$87 for the 30 days of activities.

Cash for Work and Unconditional cash transfers helped 2,030 vulnerable households to: 1) meet their immediate basic household needs including food for the family, 2) protect their households’ assets; 3) rehabilitate their degraded grazing lands and 4) mitigate conflicts and reduce the risks of disasters. Over the three rounds of CfW, 888 hectares of degraded grazing land were rehabilitated and planted with wild seed (fodder) through community contributions. In total, 5,300 “banquettes” were constructed over these 888 hectares. 55% of the CFW participants were female and the most vulnerable were given accessible tasks, such as bringing water to the workers and transporting manure for the rehabilitated lands in place of reseeded.



Beneficiaries receiving unconditional cash transfers in August of 2012

FATI: “My name is Fati: I’m a 37 year-old mother of six children. During CFW activities my neighbor, a widow, and I were provided 78,000 FCFA with which we bought and raised three sheep. We sold them during the Tabaski period at 200,000 FCFA, with the proceeds we bought three bags of 100 Kg of millet, two rams, and a sheep (and the sheep has now given birth). The millet purchased should normally cover our food needs from six to seven months, especially with the departure of my husband to exodus; we have one less mouth to feed. But you know in our society, solidarity obliges you to share. So we share and that make us reduced the number of meals that will be supported by our stock until the next harvest, so it's a bit difficult. Still, we say thank you to Mercy Corps for its support.”

3.3 Natural & Technological Risks

SECTOR #3 Natural & Technological Risks	<i>Agro-pastoralists and pastoralists sustainably manage environmental and conflict-related risks</i>		
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 8,942		
Beneficiaries Reached	10,145 (113%)		
Geographic Area (s)	Along the international transhumance corridors in Filingué Department, Niger		
Sub-Sector: Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation, and Management			
INDICATORS	Baseline	TARGET	PROGRESS
Number of people trained in disaster preparedness, mitigation, and management	0	(4,200 +4,742)	10,145 (113%) (4,591+5,554)
Number and percent of beneficiaries retaining disaster preparedness, mitigation, and management knowledge two months after training	0	4,200 (70%)	4,591 (109%)
Number of hazard risk reduction plans, policies or curriculum developed	0	4 ⁵	4

Performance Summary- Natural and Technological Risks Sector

During PASTORAL I, the project implemented three activities focused on: 1) putting in place and training four surveillance committees to take care of the grazing lands that had been rehabilitated; 2) sensitizing a peace caravan in the target area (5,721 people in 20 communities, with at least five percent women; and 3) training 20 influential leaders on natural resource management.

Awareness sessions on disaster risk reduction and conflict mitigation: Mercy Corps and the local Departmental Land Commission (COFODEP) organized meetings in 20 communities to increase disaster risk reduction and awareness and train on community conflict mitigation. Over two years, a total of 10,145 people participated in these sessions, which addressed the following themes:

- Respect for natural resources shared by several actors
- Methods for non-violent conflict management
- Respect for hierarchy
- Land Commission, its structures, roles, and responsibilities
- Security of land tenure

These themes are primary concerns of farmers and pastoralists, attracting significant interest as they have at times caused significant tension between communities. Eventually, everyone came to understand the importance of these guidelines in order to preserve peaceful coexistence and natural resources shared between farmers and pastoralists in the same area. In all villages, this mission was much appreciated by participants who expressed their heartfelt thanks. Through

⁵ The program works with local surveillance committees, water source management committees, fodder management committees, and conflict prevention and mitigation campaigns, etc.

PASTORAL II, Mercy Corps continued supporting the establishment of land commissions (COFOBs) in all the villages involved in the program, through continued training and provision of land transaction forms in the next phases.

Capacity Building of COFOBs – Community Based Land Tenure Commissions: Starting in October of 2012, Mercy Corps began training members of 20 target community-based land commissions, a process that raised community awareness of conflict mitigation and management and on disaster risk reduction. In quarter 3 of FY13, Mercy Corps helped set up and train 10 additional COFOBs.

Mercy Corps, in collaboration with local authorities, monitored the work performed by the COFOBs in all the 30 communities to evaluate how the COFOBs applied the lessons learned during the trainings on land conflict resolution. Mercy Corps and local authorities also verified that COFOBs performed proper follow-up of land transaction procedures and used the tools and documents provided during the training, including land titling documents, contracts for sale, rent or donation of land, documentation of conflict reconciliation meetings and of agreements reached. Conflict resolution included mitigation between herders and agro-pastoralists over access to natural resources, pasture/grazing lands, and farms. As was the case with previous community sensitization campaigns, these meetings continued to foster a better understanding of the importance of these guidelines, of the role of COFOBs in applying them, and of the support linked to communal and departmental levels of the same structure; in order to ensure peaceful coexistence and optimal shared use of communal natural resources by farmers and pastoralists.

For all 30 COFOBs that were established and trained, the process included the following steps:

1. First, a general village meeting was convened to help facilitate linkages between different groups at the village level for the COFOBs as well as help them choose their best representatives to the COFOB. These visits also allowed exchanges with the village about the following themes:
 - Key local land-use issues
 - Prevention of conflicts linked to shared natural resource use
 - Sharing actual texts and institutions of the *Code Rural*
 - Participative definition of criteria for choice of members of the COFOB, to ensure full transparency about the choice of COFOB representatives
2. COFOB leaders were subsequently selected, by the village, including a president, secretary, as well as youth and women's representatives.
3. After its members were selected, the COFOB was officially recognized at the communal level in the presence of elected officials, partners, and the communal and departmental level of these conflict management structures. The mayor or other government representative gave an official word then formally acknowledged the members of the committee. The members, and their roles in the COFOB, were then presented to the community.

4. The commissioned COFOB then received three-day training that touched on key topics, including:
- Process by which natural resources can be secured,
 - Early warning monitoring and response mechanisms,
 - Different structures of the *Code Rural*,
 - The rationale for and the procedures by which different land related transactions occur,
 - The functions of the COFOB, and,
 - Record taking.



COFOB Training – Filingué

The president of the COFOB of Tarkassa:

“Who could imagine that our community could have a COFOB as strong and competent as it is. Our committee is able to establish land deeds for a fraction of the cost of the regional authorities. For example, in 2010, I had to spend 60,000 FCFA in fees to purchase 12 hectares of land, and I was forced to ask assistance from family and friends to pay this. The service offered by the COFOB relieves this financial burden (allowing community members to access and protect their land assets). »

3.4 Nutrition

SECTOR #4 Nutrition	<i>Agro-pastoralists and pastoralists have increased knowledge about appropriate nutrition practices</i>		
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 6,000	Budget	\$43,614
Beneficiaries Reached	6,076 101,27%		
Geographic Area (s)	Along the international transhumance corridors in Filingué Department, Niger		
Sub-Sector: Nutrition Education and Behavioral Change			
INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	PROGRESS
Number of beneficiaries receiving nutrition education	0	6,000	6,076
Number of providers (health care and/or community volunteers) trained in provision of nutrition education	0	20 ⁶	25 ⁷

Sector Summary

During PASTORAL I, Mercy Corps conducted nutritional and culinary sensitization and training sessions to promote key nutritional behaviors and the use of locally-available food to improve nutrition after monitoring through the mid-upper arm circumference indicators (MUAC) the nutritional status of children between six and 59 months. The main theme of the sensitization was exclusive breastfeeding. The following activities were conducted:

- Through the community health teams established and trained by Mercy Corps under a previous community health project throughout the Filingué department, children between six and 59 months living in the communities along the transhumance corridor were monitored. Children demonstrating severe and/or moderate malnutrition were referred to health centers for better evaluation and treatment. During the phase of this activity, 8,583 children were monitored. Of those, 16% were moderately malnourished and 10% (9 children) severely malnourished and referred to health centers for better diagnosis and treatment.
- During the same period, Mercy Corps staff noted a lack of therapeutic feeds (Plumpy'nut) in the referral centers. Mercy Corps successfully engaged an advocacy plan among partners in charge of supplying the health district. Using private funds, Mercy Corps dispatched Plumpy'nut in 38 centers in order to improve the process of taking care of severely malnourished children who were referred;
- 2,573 parents (men and women) of children along the corridors received sensitizations on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and causes of malnutrition. A total of 6,076 parents were reached in this process during PASTORAL I.

The nutrition interventions ended in March 2012 with the end of PASTORAL I.

⁶ The program aims to work with at least one health care and nutrition education provider in each targeted community.

⁷ 5 health centers (Louma ,Gao, Filingué, Toukounous, Sabon Gari) each with a team of 5 providers or volunteers

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

During all initial phases of PASTORAL I & II, Mercy Corps' M&E team undertook baseline surveys, and in collaboration with program team, developed work and indicator plans to guide all phases of program implementation. Monitoring activities were followed up and surveys were conducted to measure the accomplishment and the quality of the program. Post distributions' monitoring surveys were also conducted after the vaccination campaigns, animal feeds distribution and cash distributions to measure the impact of activities on the lives of target populations, as well as controlling markets' prices to ensure cash distributions were not negatively impacting the markets.

In March-April 2013, Mercy Corps led an internal final evaluation of the program to: assess the effectiveness of project activities in reaching their objectives, identify strengths of and lessons learned from the program, and understand the overall impact of the project on beneficiary communities. The evaluation team conducted interviews and focus groups with 293 households in all of the communes targeted by the project. This evaluation was implemented in coordination with local authorities and government partners. Mercy Corps plans to conduct a post project evaluation, at least one year after the program's close, to measure the impact of activities on the target beneficiaries in building their resilience to future shocks and mitigating the risk of disasters and conflict. The evaluation will also aim to inform Mercy Corps on the most successful and replicable activities and lessons to be learned.

4. Coordination

Throughout the program, Mercy Corps' PASTORAL project staff coordinated with the government extensions services, the beneficiary communities, traditional leaders and the local and communal authorities to ensure ownership and full participation, as well as with other stakeholders and partner agencies to avoid duplication. At the beginning of PASTORAL II, the staff organized a program launch meeting with key stakeholders, Government extensions services, including partner agencies working in Filingué such as ACTED, Africare, ARZIKI-Clusa, AREN, WFP, TIMIDRIA etc. the departmental of land management commission (COFODEP), and local authorities including local chiefs, and explained the objectives and target areas of the program. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with government extensions services for the duration of the project's implementation. Mercy Corps believes that the most effective and long lasting programs are those driven and owned by communities and local authorities in the target areas.

5. Overall Cost Effectiveness

As a whole, the cost-effectiveness of implementation of the PASTORAL program was enhanced through Mercy Corps' experience in Niger, strong relationships with local authorities and partners, and in depth understanding of the most urgent needs of beneficiaries. The program was designed to build community resilience while mitigating high levels of food insecurity, through short-term relief as well as through support to community-based structures to help reduce food insecurity and protect household assets over the medium and long term. Through the program,

Mercy Corps helped empower local organizations, such as COFOBs and water and rehabilitated land management committees, who will continue to manage resources and provide needed services to their communities. In addition, trainings, including those focused on improved fodder harvesting and storage, will be replicated within communities as the benefits of such practices become apparent. PASTORAL has engaged beneficiary communities as well by fostering linkages between the communities and government partners and authorities.

Finally, Mercy Corps was able to leverage the impact of PASTORAL to obtain private funds, with which we were able to rehabilitate an additional 5 pastoral wells in the zone.

6. Conclusion

The USAID/OFDA-funded PASTORAL program was awarded at a very relevant time for the agro-pastoral and pastoral populations along the international transhumance corridors in Filingué department, Tillabéri region of Niger. Mercy Corps' years of experience in Niger in addition to the communities' ownership of the program, the technical expertise of the Mercy Corps team in this domain, and the continued support from OFDA contributed to the success of the PASTORAL program. The program has proven to be a model for disaster risk reduction and building the resilience of vulnerable communities in Niger, as acknowledged by OFDA through the Award for Excellence and Learning in Disaster Risk Reduction received by the program in October 2012.